



*Church
of the
Immaculate
Conception*



SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE
SAINT MARY-OF-THE-WOODS
INDIANA



*This is the covenant that I will
make with the house of Israel
after those days, says the Lord;
I will put my laws into their
minds and write them on their
hearts. I will be their God and
they shall be my people.*

—Jeremias 31:33

● Interior view of the church.

Church of the Immaculate Conception

Dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Church of the Immaculate Conception is the focal point of the Saint Mary-of-the-Woods campus.

The cornerstone was laid in 1886, and the Italian Renaissance church, built of Indiana limestone, was completed and consecrated in 1907.

ARCHITECTURE

The basic plan of the structure is cruciform with an apse, or semi-dome, transept and a broad central nave. Above the pillars on each side of the church are the galleries built in the tradition of Christian basilicas. The rose and gray marble pillars are from the quarries of Georgia, as also are the green marble sanctuary steps.

The color scheme of the inside of the church varies from the dark olive green of the floor to the light green and rose hues of the walls and the cream and gold of the sunken coffer ceiling.

The marble floor of the sanctuary, laid in 1937, is made up

of cream Botticina with white marble square inlays outlined with corners of Belgian black and centers of light rose marble.

THE ALTARS

The main altar is made of Carrara marble trimmed with Pavonazzo. It is in Renaissance design and rises thirty-one feet in height. Four sections rise one above the other in horizontal lines: the table support, the tabernacle section, the exposition section and the marble scroll-braced niche containing the statue of the Sacred Heart.

In the center of the frontal of the altar is sculptured the Lamb of the Apocalypse on the Book with seven seals, and on each side between the marble scroll-brackets are the Greek letters symbolic of the unity of God, Alpha and Omega.

The gold plated tabernacle door with the letters I. H. S. in high relief was made from the family heirlooms presented to the Sisters. The exposition throne is lined with gold Venetian mosaic, more than 110,000 pieces, as is also the niche above, which contains the statue of the Sacred Heart.



● *The Rosary Altar on the gospel side of the church.*

were presented by Pope Gregory XVI to Bishop de la Hailandière in 1845. The Bishop on his return from Rome presented the relics to Mother Theodore.

The two altars in the transept on the epistle side are dedicated to Saint Ann and Saint Joachim, parents of the Blessed

The statues of Saint Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, as well as those on the other altars, are of Carrara. Under the altar of the Blessed Virgin are the relics of Saint Urban, pope and martyr. A casket within the recumbent wax figure contains the larger bones of the saint. Under the altar of Saint Joseph are the relics of Saint Theodore, martyr. As in the case of Saint Urban, the casket contains nearly all the bones except those of one hand.

The relics of both saints

Virgin, and to the Jesuit saints, Aloysius, John Berchmans and Stanislaus, respectively. The two corresponding altars on the gospel side are dedicated to the Holy Rosary, with Saints Dominic and Catherine of Siena, and to Saints Agatha, Agnes and Cecilia, virgin martyrs. The reredos of the Rosary Altar has been called by good judges of sculpture the finest piece in the church. The two statues above the pillars at the beginning of the nave are those of Saint Rose of Lima and Saint Teresa of Avila.



● *A view from the back of the church down the side aisle toward the altar of the Blessed Virgin.*

The Stations of the Way of the Cross were executed in Munich and were installed at the time the church was finished, about 1890.

The holy water fountains at the entrance of the church are cut from Pavonazzetto marble. They are octagonal in form to conform to the ancient Christian symbolism of the figure eight, which stands for regeneration. The walls of the central vestibule are lined with Pavonazzetto marble.

The marble of the altar railing is Skyros, a rare and beautiful veined marble which comes from an island in the Aegean Sea and of which many ancient monuments in Greece were built. This marble quarry, it is believed, was worked in the time of Christ, then fell into disuse and was re-discovered in the 19th century. The three steps leading up to the main altar are of dark Pavonazzetto marble.



● *Station of the Cross.*

THE PAINTINGS

The mural paintings in the church are by the late Thaddeus von Zukotyński of Munich and Chicago. The fresco in the semi-dome represents the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary with the symbol of the serpent beneath her feet. To her left is the archangel Gabriel, and on her right is the archangel Michael. The semi-dome is a mural and there are paintings of the four Evangelists in the arcade beneath the dome. The Ascension on the center of the ceiling, the Flight into Egypt at the right and the Return from Calvary at the left are light painted canvases.



● *Marble Communion rail in the main church.*



● Stained glass window depicting the Old Testament story of Esther before King Assuerus.

Lady's ancestor. The intention in choosing these designs for the windows and other ornaments of the church was to represent as many phases as possible of devotion to the Mother of God.

THE WINDOWS

The stained glass windows from the Bavarian Art Institute, Munich, are said by experts to represent the greatest perfection of this Bavarian art. The windows in the north and south transepts, as well as the windows in the nave, depict scenes from the lives of Christ and His Mother. Near the end of the church and opposite each other are the two great types of the Blessed Virgin in the Old Testament, Judith and Esther; and opposite each in the last two windows are the Prophet Isaiah, who foretold the virgin motherhood, and David, Our

Symbols of many invocations of the Litany of Our Lady can be seen in the frieze around the cove of the ceiling of the church and the emblems in relief between the upper arches of the pillars above the gallery. The twelve Maltese crosses painted at intervals on the walls are the ecclesiastical designation for a consecrated church.



● Painting of the Ascension of Our Lord on the ceiling.



● Fresco of the Immaculate Conception in the semi-dome of the church.

THE ORGAN In the rear of the choir which surrounds the nave is a Casavant organ, made by the Casavant Freres Company of Saint Hyacinth, Canada. The organ has three manuals, twenty-seven ranks and approximately 1,700 pipes. The dedicatory recital was given on December 8, 1953.

Hung in the tower of the church is a chime of eleven bells tuned to the key of D. The total weight of the bells is 13,150 pounds. The bells were cast of tin and copper by the McShane Bell Foundry Company of Baltimore and installed in 1910. A name and a Latin inscription are engraved on each bell, as each bell was blessed in the name of

one or more saints, the letter M signifying the name of Mary. According to an age-old ritual, the bells were blessed on December 2, 1910.

THE CRYPT

Below the church proper is the crypt chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is also reserved, the second of the eight chapels on the grounds. Approximately beneath the dark green sanctuary steps of the church is the tomb chapel of the Foundress, Mother Theodore Guérin, who died on May 14, 1856, and whose Cause for Beatification was introduced at Rome in 1914. Her body was exhumed from the grave in

● *Casavant organ in the rear of the choir which surrounds the nave.*

● *Tomb chapel of Foundress Mother Theodore Guerin, located beneath the church.*

● *A view of the sanctuary of the crypt located beneath the church proper.*



the convent cemetery on December 3, 1907, and transferred to the vault in the crypt. A collection of souvenirs of Mother Theodore is found in this chapel.

In the alcove over the vaults is a replica of the Holy Image sent to Sister Saint Francis by Monsieur Leon Dupont, the famed Holy Man of Tours. Blessed by Pope Pius IX for the Sisters of Providence, the Image is displayed on an altar of inlaid wood designed and constructed by William Klueh, cabinet maker for the Sisters for many years. Above the Image is a relic of the true Cross.

In the antechamber to the tomb chapel is a vast collection of first and second class relics, begun in 1840 by the pioneer Sisters of the Congregation and added to by various bishops. After a careful investigation and examination of documents, the Most Reverend F. S. Chatard, Bishop of Indianapolis, confirmed the authentication of each relic about the time of the consecration of the church.

In the sanctuary of the crypt proper is a simple liturgical altar constructed in the workshop of the institution from woods on the grounds. Here also are the representations of the Ecce Homo, Calvary, and a Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes. Placed by the pillars in the nave are statues of various saints.



Our Lady of the Campus.